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The final, published version in International Journal of Event and Festival Management, 9 (1), pp. 20-33, 2018 is available at:

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-09-2017-0051>

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International Journal of Event and Festival Management

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Article information:

To cite this document:

Chiara Orefice, "Designing for events – a new perspective on event design", International Journal of Event and Festival Management, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-09-2017-0051>

Permanent link to this document:

<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-09-2017-0051>

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Designing for events – a new perspective on event design

Introduction

In recent years academia and industry have experienced a change in the way in which events are considered. Rather than focusing only on logistical and operational aspects, there is a growing debate about events conceived as socially constructed staged experiences lived differently by different audiences that require designing instead of managing (Brown, 2005; Getz, 2012; Crowther, 2014). Brown (2014) argues that a paradigmatic shift from event management predominant research to event design predominant research is taking place and this generates a rich, new field to be explored. There is no agreed characterisation of event design, with different authors providing a range of definitions over time. While O’Toole (2011, p.183) considers it as ‘a purposeful arrangement of elements of an event to maximise the positive impression on the attendees and other key stakeholders’, according to Ferdinand and Kitchin (2012) event design relates to the activation of sensory and emotional experiences and it is not just a simple matter of production. Getz (2012) identifies design with the implementation of themes, settings, consumables, services and programmes that deliver experiences for several stakeholders to derive specific objectives. Overall, there is an agreement that design is both an art and a science aimed at creating and delivering meaningful experiences, and that it combines different dimensions starting from the event conceptualisation stage and ending with the solution to a specific problem that delivers a set of pre-defined objectives. This sets design as an integrated and fundamental activity taking place before any operational aspects of the event are considered (Berridge, 2007; Brown, 2005; Getz *et al.*, 2010; McLoughlin, 2015).

This conceptual article traces the evolution of event design and discusses recent developments in research on event experience design with the aim to derive a new perspective informed by design management and service design literature and more specifically the concept of Design Thinking. Design Thinking (DT) is an all-encompassing term that has evolved over the years as part of the development of design management literature, with different definitions depending on the discipline researching it. Lockwood (2009) defines DT as primarily an innovation process aimed at discovering needs and opportunities to create new solutions, but also an approach for business transformation and strategy that connects people and businesses through design. DT has been researched as part of management disciplines as well as design disciplines with different uses and implications of the term, as well as some criticism. The key concepts derived within these disciplines are analysed and contrasted in the first part of the paper to provide the backbone for a new framework to categorise event design based on the notion that events should be considered as generating value creating systems.

The second part of the article delves deeper into the implications of this evolved perspective, building on Brand and Rocchi (2011)'s consideration that our society is experiencing a shift from the experience economy to the knowledge economy where the concept of value is changing.

Organisations in the public, private and third sectors are now operating in an environment where value is co-created through peer-to-peer interaction in networks of several actors, usually thanks to technology (Gardien *et al.*, 2014). As a result, the focus is shifting from creating experiences aimed at attracting and maintaining customers, to designing enabling platforms that support exchange and value co-creation amongst peers and over time (Brand and Rocchi, 2011). In events, this transition is evidenced in the way in which event professionals are proving effective in designing engaging experiences, but are still struggling in articulating what role they are playing in delivering value to clients and participants (Rogers, 2013). Similarly, academia is just beginning to consider different notions of value in events, as a separate discussion from the traditional evaluation of impacts or legacy (Getz *et al.*, 2017), which is based on an operational view of events. The challenge is that there is little understanding of the long-term influence of event design on its stakeholders and how they carry on co-creating value after the event is over and the event professional has little influence. The paper concludes that considering event design as contributing to the creation of event experiences is only the starting point to derive a comprehensive analysis of its influence on value creation. A new definition of event design as a strategic contributor to long-term stakeholder value is proposed.

The evolution of the event experience design concept

The definition of event design has evolved significantly in the past twenty years and several prominent authors have provided an analysis of event design characteristics and features (see for instance Berridge, 2007, Brown, 2005, Getz, 2012). In the beginnings design was mostly coinciding with theming and décor, thus enhancing the aesthetic aspects of the event experience (Monroe, 2006; Silvers, 2004), and was part of the conceptualisation and development stage of new event products (Shone and Parry, 2013; Tum *et al.*, 2006). The critical step forward in the evolution of the concept consisted in the acknowledgement that design is ultimately aimed at delivering specific objectives through problem solving activities and it is not an add-on but a core activity that comes before management. The design principles of scale, shape, focus, timing and build identified by Brown and James (2004) and then embedded by Getz (2012) in the three foundations of setting, people and management allow an event concept to translate into a practical application (Brown, 2005; Berridge, 2007; Getz, 2012). Design should be integrated at different levels of the organisational structure, culture, processes and values, including all components leading to the staging of an experience that need to be purposefully created (Berridge, 2012; Brown, 2005; Brown, 2014). This characterises a paradigmatic shift from event management predominance to event design predominance where event design underpins all decisions about planning and managing the event. Underlying this view is a

conceptualisation of events as key opportunities for experience creation and meaning making which cannot be completely guaranteed or predicted. The event designer can only provide opportunities for affecting audience behaviour and generate positive experiences, choreographing as many event components as possible to facilitate the realisation of the objectives of the many and varied stakeholders (Berridge, 2012; Brown and Hutton, 2013; Crowther, 2014; Getz, 2012). With a specific focus on the audience, Brown and Hutton (2013) identify three pillars of design – to capture the audience, to provide the foundation for an optimal experience and to deliver the event objectives – but they also highlight the importance of additional principles such as emotions, authenticity and surprise amongst others. The psychological, physiological and behavioural elements of the audience should therefore be thoroughly understood to design effective experiences. Beard (2014) expands on the multi-dimensional characteristics of event experiences identifying the sensory, affective, conative and cognitive components, and the role of belonging and of being, intended as the realisation of a deep relationship with other people, causes or environments, as well as the possible personal transformation generated by an event. This allows to derive a framework for experience design based on the physical environment, the activities and interactions, the sensory, emotional and learning components, and the potential personal change, and improves the predictability of the experience outcomes (Berridge, 2012; Zoels and Gabrielli, 2003).

Recent contributions to how event experiences can be understood and designed come from service design concepts (Gerritsen and van Olderen, 2014). They reiterate the importance of putting the customer's point of view at the centre of design adopting tools such as journey mapping and touchpoints. McLoughlin (2015) for instance characterises event design as an all-encompassing activity that delivers a 'participatory, emotional and memorable experience' (p.241). He suggests that a blueprint including the physical and emotional elements of the event must be identified, with a clear idea of the objectives that these activities should deliver, and the level of participation involved. This way a long term 'experience relationship' is created between designers and their audience. At the heart of service design is the idea that services are developed through interaction with several stakeholders and through specific tools and approaches that designers apply in their work. Adopting a service design perspective allows designers to integrate the needs, emotions and experiences of users with the products and services offered thus influencing the way in which value is co-created (Miettinen *et al.*, 2015). However, if the only way to deliver a personal experience is to co-create it with participants (Vargo *et al.*, 2008), then event participants are not passive recipients of designed experiences, but they are themselves a key component of experience creation, contributing to the social aspects as well as the event content (Robertson and Brown, 2015).

In a recent article exploring festival experiences adopting a Service Dominant Logic (SDL) perspective, Van Winkle and Bueddefeld (2016) explore the co-creative elements of experiences and

explain that it is not enough to focus on the dyadic relationship where designers are co-creating with attendees, which are considered as resources in the process. Instead, attendees co-create their own experience in a social context, cooperating with other participants and service providers, rather than directly with the designer, to activate resources and create meaning. In this collective dimension of experiences, their social systems play a part in the experience outcome, providing cognitive, emotional and hedonic benefits. Participants create experiences by adding their individual life history to the sensory, cognitive, affective, emotional and social experiences within an event eco-system in an evolving way (Liu *et al.*, 2017). To address this new dimension, Teixeira *et al.* (2012) propose a systematic approach to experience modelling, in an attempt to map context, activities, artefacts and systems surrounding actors. For them, modelling needs to happen at three distinct stages – the encounter level, i.e. each individual touchpoint; the service experience level, as designed by an individual provider at a specific occurrence; and the value constellation level, which includes the interactions with all other actors and organisations in a system that extends over space and time.

This multi-level approach to experience design complements Richards (2015a) assessment that even though stakeholders' needs, experiences and objectives are considered, event design literature tends to look at events in isolation, whereas they are instead collective, social activities. Event design should not be approached only as a way to produce meaningful or unforgettable experiences, but also as contributing to the social context of events. As such, events should be studied as having a 'recursive relationship' with their context (Richards, 2015a, p. 16) and as a way to influence social processes that have potentially a transformational role. Within this broader view that considers the temporal and spatial context, events are spaces for social interaction that affect, and are affected, by social structures and practices (Richards, 2015b).

The introduction of service design tools and the adoption of a broader socio-cultural approach open up two interesting areas of discussion for industry and academia. The first contributes to the debate on how event experiences should be designed, the second is more radical and leads to derive a new view of event design altogether. Disciplines such as design management and service design can provide useful insights to explore these developments. The next sections trace the evolution of the concept of Design Thinking and introduce a range of concepts that will be used later in the paper to propose a new perspective on event design.

Design Thinking in the Management discourse

The term Design Thinking became particularly well known from the beginning of the new millennium thanks to some prominent business authors (e.g. Brown, 2009) and academics (e.g. Martin, 2009) who brought it to the attention of the general public as a tool for approaching business strategy from an innovative perspective. According to the Design Management Institute (DMI, 2015) "the scope of

design management ranges from the tactical management ... to the strategic advocacy of design across the organization as a key differentiator and driver of organizational success. It includes the use of design thinking—or using design processes to solve general business problems.” Cooper *et al.* (2009) found that while design management has been traditionally more concerned with individual projects, DT represents a more radical shift to a different way of doing business by enhancing organisational capabilities. They identify this shift as “managing as designing” - i.e. approaching management activities and strategies as design activities and strategies - as opposed to “designing as managing” - i.e. applying design as a management tool. Within this perspective, DT relies on aesthetics as well as rationality, bringing together the organisation’s vision, culture and identity with its customers’ perception, reasoning and emotions. A human centred approach is adopted, where customers are involved in co-creation and prototyping activities, and visual methods are adopted for idea generation – with journey mapping being a core tool (Liedtka and Ogilvie, 2011).

Characteristics of DT are a systemic perspective, the capacity to adapt to emerging problems and deliver quick solutions, an attitude towards experimentation, empathy, and the acknowledgement that design is a transformative discipline and creates something new rather than just improving the existing (Brown, 2009; Boland and Collopy, 2004). Two additional core principles are the aim of generating behavioural change (Brown, 2009) and the importance of addressing the triple bottom line, i.e. the social and environmental implications, as well as the economic ones (Elkington, 1997; Gruber *et al.*, 2015). Martin (2009) proposes that DT requires a combination of analysis and intuition and is the balance of art and science. Models can be created of complex problems to allow for non-linear and iterative thought processes, and prototypes are used to explore possible solutions that tolerate failure. This implies the need to accept more ambiguity and to embrace risk as inherent to the design process (Kolko, 2015).

The Design Ladder (Danish Design Centre, 2007) provides an interesting framework to analyse the role and use of design in organisations. The ladder comprises 4 steps, the starting point being non-design and step 2 being design as form-giving, related to the styling process of products and services. Step 3 considers design as a process dictated by a specific problem and integrated at the earlier stages of concept development. The highest level (step 4) of the ladder considers a business concept in relation to its value proposition within a long-term organisational strategy. This is *design as strategy*. With a similar approach Borja de Mozota (2003, 2006), differentiates between operational, functional and strategic design. Operational design considers design as a tool, something that is used ‘from the outside’ to add form and value to a product or service that can be measured in terms of sales, profit or image. Functional design is a way to approach projects and integrate a variety of processes, such as communications, human resources or production, so that non-designers can resolve specific problems using the distinctive practices of designers discussed above. Strategic design requires integrating

design approaches at the level of an organisation's mission and long-term strategy, where design becomes a key resource for value generation (Borja de Mozota, 2003; Calabretta *et al.*, 2016).

Design Thinking in the Design discourse

Design theorists (e.g. Kimbell, 2011a; Johansson-Skoldberg *et al.*, 2013) have debated the concept, value and development of DT, at times critiquing how the term has been used in the management discourse. The design discourse has developed for a longer time and is based on a strong scholarly foundation that considers DT as part of a much more complex idea of design within different disciplines, including philosophy, architecture, engineering, art and semantics (Johansson-Skoldberg *et al.*, 2013). Different sub-discourses can be identified which range from design viewed as a problem solving activity, to design viewed as a reflexive practice or an activity aimed at making sense of things, to design as the creation of meaning (Kimbell, 2009).

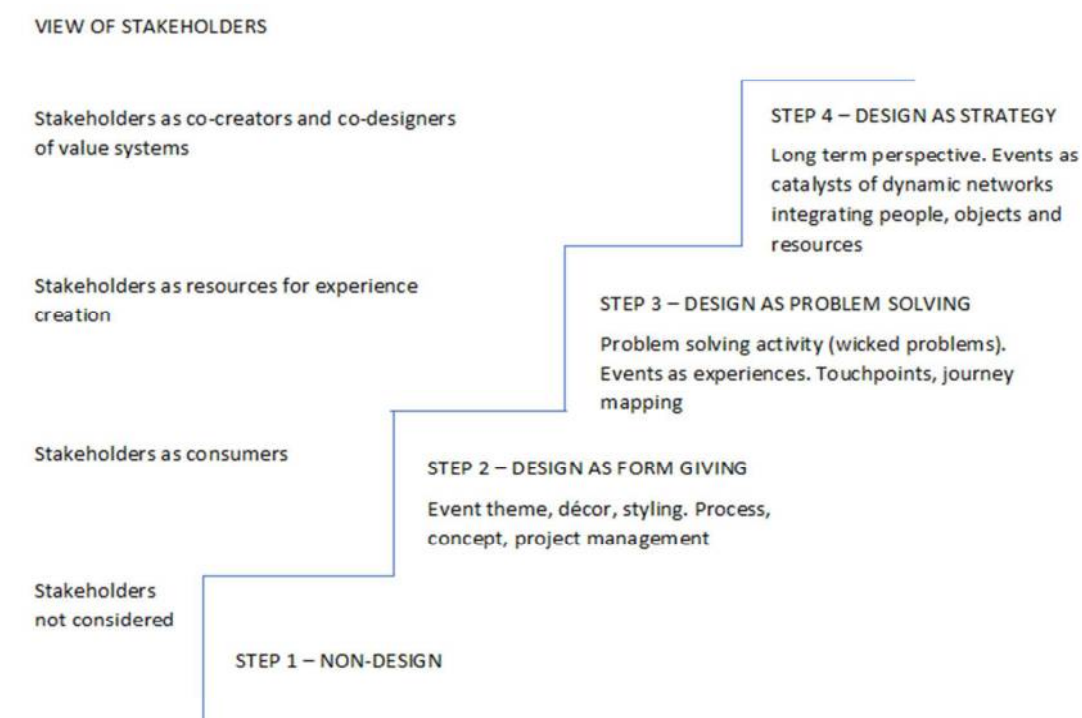
Two prominent authors in particular have discussed design as a problem solving activity. Simon (1969) considers it as a rational set of procedures in response to a well identified problem that can be solved by decomposing it in its parts, and aims towards an improved state of affairs that can be determined in advance. Buchanan (1992) on the other hand addresses the so-called “wicked problems”. Wicked problems are complex and ill-defined, they involve many decision makers and clients with conflicting values, and the information provided for solving them is confusing. Wicked problems can be formulated and solved in many different ways. They do not have a true/false solution requiring a technical (or engineering) approach, but just a good or bad one. Every wicked problem is unique and there is only one chance to get it right, hence it is better represented using a customer journey rather than a simple process that transforms inputs into outputs (Gruber *et al.*, 2015).

In his work Buchanan (1992, 2001) structures design in four orders according to what is being designed, which correspond to the evolution of the design disciplines over time. The first and second orders are symbols and material objects – corresponding to graphic, industrial and communication design. He observes that although it is important for designers to know how to create things and visual symbols for communication, unless these become part of the life experience of human beings, they have no value or meaning. The third order is therefore action - which corresponds to interaction design - and is concerned with how people relate to each other through the mediating influence of objects, experiences and services. The fourth and final order are environments and systems, integrating people, objects and interactions in daily activities. Systems and environments influence our lives even though we can never see or experience them in their totality, but we only create our personal pathway through them through symbols and representations (Buchanan, 2001).

The evolution of the role of design in the four orders described by Buchanan (2001), from form and function, to experience, to systems suggests a new direction for the conceptualisation of event design, as explained in the next section. Design should not only be considered from an external perspective as creating form and function and requiring the application of specific tools and techniques, but it should be viewed from an actions and systems perspective, which requires understanding from the inside of the socially and culturally constructed experience of people. Rather than concentrating only on single individuals, and their experiences and expectations, designers should focus on the day-to-day practices within which these experiences and their meaning are created (Kimbell, 2014). This changes to role of design, which is no longer about how objects or services are created but rather about the value they deliver as part of a complex system of interactions. The implications of this new perspective are illustrated below to derive a framework for event design, called the Event Design Ladder.

The Event Design Ladder

Figure 1 – The Event Design Ladder



(Adapted from Danish Design Centre, 2007; Ramirez and Mannervik, 2008)

Combining the core findings of the management and the design discourses and applying the Danish Design Ladder and Borja De Mozota's frameworks, it is possible to derive a new outlook on the evolution of event design discussed earlier. Traditional events management literature has so far

approached events from Simon's (1969) perspective, i.e. from an operational view. Events are projects that need to be sequentially managed and design corresponds with a theme, décor or new concept that contribute to the wow factor provided by the event. This is in line with the second step of the Design Ladder and Borja de Mozota's operational view of design, as well as Buchanan's (2001) first and second order of design. The current view of design as contributing to the creation of the event experience from a customer-centric perspective mirrors level three of the design ladder and Borja de Mozota's functional design, which considers event design as a problem solving activity. Here design permeates several different internal and external processes and is based on a journey that includes all phases before, during and after the event. This leads to a clear purpose in the design that improves the predictability of the experience outcomes (Berridge, 2012). The work of Buchanan (1992, 2001) introduced above provides some interesting insights when considering event design at this level. Approaching events as 'wicked problems' justifies innovative and creative approaches to their design, including service design tools such as journey mapping, touchpoints and storytelling (Gerritsen and van Olderen, 2014; McLoughlin, 2015). This is design at the third order of Buchanan's framework, interaction, which targets the different dimensions of the event experience identified by Beard (2014).

The conceptualisation of the strategic view of event design – the fourth level of the design ladder - is still in its infancy. Crowther (2014) identifies a key characteristic of a strategic approach – the focus on the perspective of multiple stakeholders and their objectives, which requires an understanding of how they live and experience the event. Approaching event design strategically means creating "purposeful spaces" where activities and relationships are developed, which in turn produce specific behaviours in a range of stakeholders (Liedtka, 2000). Within this perspective, events are value creating platforms (Crowther and Orefice, 2015) and event design becomes a resource for value generation that delivers the long term organisational mission and vision. In turn, the designer becomes a partner in decision-making and an orchestrator of transformation through the creation of capacity building (Borja de Mozota, 2003; Karpen *et al.*, 2016). An illustration of this role of the designer is provided by a group of professionals who developed the Event Canvas to derive the components of value creation for events (Frissen *et al.*, 2016). The Event Canvas is a visual chart co-created with stakeholders based on mapping their characteristics and journeys, adopting an empathic approach that goes through several iterations. It is aimed at helping them get their jobs done, resolving pains and creating gains, and it articulates the behavioural changes expected as a result of having participated in the event.

The Event Design Ladder in Figure 1 visually summarises the different perspectives on event design, extending the original framework developed by the Danish Design Centre to include two core elements of strategic event design – the role of stakeholders and the focus on value creation. Value generation with and amongst stakeholders specifically characterises design as strategy, and it is based

on adopting a SDL perspective on the creation of event experiences, which are conceived as collectively created in social systems (Caru' and Cova, 2015; Van Winkle and Bueddefeld, 2016; Vargo *et al.*, 2008).

A new perspective on event design - from experience creation to value creation

Considering the role of design at step 4 of the Event Design Ladder within a SDL perspective has a range of implications for both event professionals and researchers. As explained by Brand and Rocchi (2011) our society is transitioning from the experience economy to the knowledge economy where the concept of value is changing. In this social, complex environment value is co-created through interaction in networks of several actors and public and private funding combines with support from not-for-profit entities in constantly different ways (Manzini, 2011). As a result, organisations are no longer focusing on the production of specific services or experiences to attract and maintain customers, but rather on platforms that support exchange and value co-creation amongst peers and over time (Brand and Rocchi, 2011). Richards (2015b) and Richards and Colombo (2017) explain that networks – and particularly informal networks - represent the way in which society is taking shape and argue that the analysis of value creation in events needs to progress from traditional areas of economic, social and cultural value, to focus on new forms of value that are created through linking actors, organisations and individuals. This new notion is underpinned by a perspective on events as social phenomena consisting of material objects and semiotic meanings actively contributing to networks of physical and conceptual elements. As potential catalysts for social change, their role is linking actors and resources together by helping to create or reinforce social structures that can be local or distributed in time and space (Richards, 2015b).

Evardsson *et al.* (2011) explain this idea as value-in-social-context, approaching service co-creation from a social constructionist perspective that considers humans as having the potential to adapt to their social structures, learn and make their own choices through making sense of their environment and activities. Similarly to Van Winkle and Bueddefeld (2016), they argue for a contextual perspective that considers an organisation as the provider of resources for continuing value-creation processes in ever changing configurations of people, technology, information and other service systems that are never directly observable in their entirety. These resources, however, are also social constructions as the actors involved interpret and use them within their own social system that evolve and adapt over time (Evardsson *et al.*, 2011; Vargo *et al.*, 2008). Customers are no longer just a source of value but actively participate in the co-design of their entire value systems where design provides a facilitating, rather than a prescriptive role. The Event Design Ladder in Figure 1 shows this different view of stakeholders and the way in which they contribute to value creation in events.

A consequence of this new perspective on events and on value creation is that event design should not only be considered as orchestrating experiences at step 3 of the ladder, but rather position itself at step 4, building on the experience to create value in the long term. In the context of experiential services in particular the focus should be not only on designing a single touchpoint or service encounter (Teixeira *et al.*, 2012) but on an ongoing series of active interactions that take place “repeatedly, anywhere and at any time” (Zomerdijsk and Voss, 2010, p.77) in a value system or constellation. This change in perspective leads to move beyond approaching design as a process integrator aimed at creating meaningful experiences that adopts a top-down approach and puts designers at the centre taking advantage of customers and resources to derive specific objectives. For the event value to be fully justified, actors should actively participate and benefit from the event experience as part of a dynamic value system that reaches beyond the event itself. However, if the boundaries of an event extend over time and space, the influence of the event designer can become minimal or non-existent.

When events are considered as designed experiences, their success is evaluated during or immediately after they end, but there is little understanding of how stakeholders carry on benefitting and co-constructing relationships and knowledge once the event has taken place and even in geographically dispersed locations (Richards and Colombo, 2017). The traditional approaches and tools of event design can only assist up to a certain extent in explaining how value is created in events. As the end result of the design process materialises only in the long term and is rarely known by the designer, it cannot be approached as a problem-solving activity with a clear end solution from the start (Kimbell, 2011b). The focus needs to shift to how design can contribute to value creating systems that have stakeholders and their context at the centre, adopting an exploratory approach where the event designer takes on a capacity-building role (Karpen *et al.*, 2016).

Designing for events

To explain the role of design in value creating systems, two of the most progressive scholars in service design, Lucy Kimbell (2014) and Ezio Manzini (2011), introduce the concept of ‘hybrids’ and ‘action platforms’ as a community of people, physical or digital objects that become ecosystems where resources, ability and skills are exchanged between actors to actively design a service and influence its outcome over time. Within this framework, design contributes to the creation of a value system or constellation (Ramirez and Mannervik, 2008) where the value that the design aims at generating becomes visible in the long term (Kimbell, 2012). In dynamic and uncertain environments that involve many actors interacting with one another, design does not take shape as a problem solving activity, or a discrete process of sequential phases but more like an exploratory process of wayfinding that involves constant interaction between actors (Kimbell, 2014). Adapting from Kimbell (2011b) we define this as ‘designing for events’. If we adopt this perspective, event designers are not just providing creative direction at every touchpoint from the initiation phase to the actual event

experience, but they are also championing and facilitating collaboration across projects, integrating resources and building on the stakeholders' skills and knowledge (Gardien *et al.*, 2014; Karpen *et al.*, 2016). This long-term perspective is strategic because it shows the contribution of the event to long term value creation, but at the same time implies that event design is bound to remain always incomplete (Garud *et al.*, 2008).

Designing events as platforms for value-creating systems means looking at them in a whole new light as the combination of stakeholders and resources - such as knowledge or social capital - that they define and co-create themselves (Kimbell, 2014; Richards, 2015b). Value co-creation is facilitated by event designers by doing things with stakeholders and sometimes with the contribution of unfamiliar actors that only become influential after the event (Kimbell, 2012). As stakeholders are actively participating in creating their own knowledge and relationships, the value created is an outcome of their complex interrelationships, and the social context in which they operate is not just given, is co-created too. This opens up a critical question about the role of event professionals and their contribution to the process of 'designing for events' as well as the overall achievement of the event objectives.

Implications for event design research

Applying the designing for service approach to conceptualise event design (Kimbell, 2014), this paper moves beyond the current event design notion of experience design to analyse specifically its role in creating value. This leads to reflect on the different ways in which events should be studied, since looking at how experiences are created in a systematic and pre-defined way is not sufficient any longer. As Richards (2015b, p. 559) explains 'events are temporal practices that can play an important role in social systems'. They are characterised by a complexity of stakeholders and objectives where value is created over time by negotiating meanings, actions, situations and objects before, during and after the event has taken place. If this is the case, then experiences and networks are not only socially and culturally structured but also reconstituted by the actors' activities (Gherardi, 2009). This implies the need for a different approach to researching the relationship between design and value creation.

Practice theories - originally developed in anthropology and sociology - draw attention to what people do in their daily activities, their interaction with other people and objects (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2001). They are based on the assumption that human activities can only be studied considering human agency and social structure as one, as they influence each other in a continuous feedback loop. Core concepts of practice theory include bodies, minds, objects, knowledge and structure/process (Reckwitz, 2002), all of which are components of a value creating event network deserving exploration. Design itself can be considered as a structure constituted in practice (Kimbell, 2012) and as such it should be researched as directly contributing to the event generated value.

Practice theories are slowly entering tourism studies (Lamers *et al.*, 2017) but have not been considered in event studies yet. Knowledge is a particularly relevant aspect of event practice. Event generated value often includes the development of collaboration and knowledge (Richards, 2015b), therefore researching how design contributes to knowledge creation and sharing should be at the centre of research on event practices. Adopting a practice perspective implies that knowledge is a social accomplishment rather than situated in people's minds or at the level of social norms. 'Knowledge is no longer ... the property of individuals, but instead a feature of groups, together with their material setups' (Schatzki, 2001, p. 12). Thus practice theory shifts the unit of analysis away from both the individual level and the organisational level to research knowledge intersubjectively at an indeterminate level where people, objects, discourses, structures and processes together constitute practices alongside agency (Gherardi, 2009; Kimbell, 2012).

Conclusions

Events literature is acknowledging the transition from a managerial to a design approach of events, but even within this new perspective, the focus remains on the dynamics, components and characteristics of experience design, while the relationship with the corresponding value creation remains largely unexplored. This paper contributes to the paradigmatic shift argued by Brown (2014), by extending the theoretical foundation of event design in two directions. The first is by providing insights from design management and service design literature on designing event experiences through the application of useful Design Thinking concepts, such as the notion of wicked problems. The Event Design Ladder is proposed as a framework for categorising the role of design activities with an emphasis on the evolution towards its contribution to value creation. The input from concepts derived from design disciplines to step 3 of the ladder - event experience design - is an area that requires further exploration. In particular, research on how tools such as journey mapping, storytelling or prototyping contribute to event design is limited (Peperkamp *et al.*, 2014 offer a contribution in this direction). Specific DT features such as the capacity to adapt to emerging problems and generating behavioural change, a human-centred focus, and the importance of addressing the triple bottom line, should be researched in more detail in the context of events. Martin's (2009) suggestion that DT requires a combination of analysis and intuition, and is the balance of art and science, would also help industry professionals in the challenge of balancing between process-orientation and creativity.

The second, and more fundamental direction in the development of event design proposed by this paper consists in the identification of the new perspective of design as strategy and of the concept of designing for events. These are based on a view of events as platforms for value creating systems rather than meaningful choreographed experiences, and the idea that design is strategically contributing to long-term value creation. Adopting Kimbell's (2011b, 2012) approach leads to conceptualise event design no longer as a problem solving, linear activity, where the components of

the event experience and its outcomes can be systematically specified in advance and design is approached in a deterministic way. The choice of wording – ‘designing’ rather than design - is deliberate. If event-generated value systems are always incomplete platforms that require long-term stakeholder engagement where value develops in an uncertain time frame, this has an influence on where event designers locate themselves and what should be designed. Design becomes an ongoing activity where the designers’ contribution to the design process is on an even field with stakeholders (designing ‘with’ them), directing attention on their influence on the event outcomes. This enhanced role of design should provide a valuable argument for event professionals to justify their client’s investment.

Alongside the need for more research on event experience design (Getz *et al.*, 2010), this paper identifies a new area of event research related to design as strategy, which relates to the design of value creating social systems. Jarman *et al.* (2014) argue that social network analysis can be used to analyse events, but the role of design in these networks remains to be explored. Again, service design literature could help in this direction. For instance, Cautela *et al.* (2009) analyse the value of network centred services based on multiple transactions amongst different actors at different times and show how design becomes strategic by providing the opportunity to create an entire service system including a range of actors, their relationships and communication systems. Furthermore, the understanding of what constitutes value in a networked society is changing, as explained above. A recent book from Lundberg *et al.* (2017) provides some insight on how the concept of event value is developing. Looking at value from a design perspective could further contribute to this discussion and three different levels – personal, organisational and societal value – should be considered.

Finally, theories of practice are introduced as a way of developing events research in a new direction. Adopting a practice orientation helps viewing events and their design as subject to the influence of human and non-human actors, where stakeholders are at the centre of the design and design value is constituted in practice (Kimbell, 2012). Adopting a practice-based perspective should help extricating some of the complexity of event networks. However, the ontological and epistemological implications, as well as the methodological approaches needed to carry out practice-based research remain to be explored.

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VIEW OF STAKEHOLDERS

